

GIANT CUTGRASS

Zizaniopsis miliacea (Michx.)

Doell & Aschers.

Plant Symbol = ZIMI

Contributed By: USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center



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Alternate Names

southern wild grass, water millet

Uses

Cattle readily graze giant cutgrass from late winter through summer. If grazed in the dormant season, a mineral supplement should be provided. This grass is also used for erosion control around lakes and on stream banks. Geese and ducks forage on its green basal leaves.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

Description

Grass Family (Poaceae). Giant cutgrass is a warm-season, rhizomatous perennial grass. The height is between 3 to 9 feet. The leaf blade is long and flat, rough on edges, almost sawlike. The leaf sheath is rounded and opens with shorter than internodes. The seedhead is narrow and nodding panicles, spikelets unisexual, 1-flowered, male and female on same branch of panicle.

Management

For maximum production, no more than 50 percent of current growth by weight should be removed at any season. Controlled burning is recommended if enough dead leaves and stems accumulate on the ground to smother new growth. Burn only when there is at least 1 inch of water above soil surface. Defer grazing after burning to permit 8 inches of re-growth. Cattle walkways are essential to distribute grazing and provide access to forage on fresh marshes where this grass is important.

Establishment

Although a warm-season grass, giant cutgrass grows some in late fall along the gulf coast. It produces seed mostly in spring and early summer. It grows in dense bunches from large, creeping rhizomes. Mature plants turn yellowish after first frost, but usually have green basal leaves all year. It grows primarily on firm mineral clays or silt soils. Also, it grows in fresh-water marshes and swamps, on creek and riverbanks, and in drainage ditches and canals. It tolerates a small amount of salt in free soil water. It does best if the water level fluctuates from soil surface to 12 inches above.

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Please contact your local NRCS Field Office.

Reference

Leithead, H.L., L.L. Yarlett, & T.N. Shiflett. 1976. 100 native forage grasses in 11 southern states. USDA SCS Agriculture Handbook No. 389, Washington, DC.

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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